

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
IO-13 ACDA-12 HA-05 /094 W
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P 021405Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9261
INFO USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 3385

DEPT PASS HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, ET
SUBJ: ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY OPERATIONS COMMAND
CLAIMS MORE VICTORIES IN ERITREA

REF: ADDIS ABABA 3341 AND PREVIOUS

1. ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY OPERATIONS
COMMAND (NROC) ANNOUNCED LATE 1 AUGUST CAPTURE OF
ADDITIONAL ERITREAN TOWNS. DIGSA (14 59 N 39 13 E)
AND SAGANEITI (15 02 N 39 11 E) WERE CAPTURED BY
GROUP "D" OF THE 503RD TASK FORCE FROM THE ERITREAN
POPULAR LIBERATION FRONT (EPLF) ON 31 JULY. THE
NROC ALLEGED THAT THE EPLF HAD DESTROYED MICRO-WAVE
COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT AT DIGSA WORTH "SEVERAL
MILLION BIRR".

2. GROUP "A" OF THE 503RD TASK FORCE MOVED OUT FROM
ADI UGRI (14 54 N 38 48 E) AND CAPTURED AREZA TO THE
WEST ON 1 AUGUST.

3. NROC CLAIMED THAT CROWDS FROM THE LIBERATED
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AREAS GREETED ETHIOPIAN FORCES WITH JUBILATION AND
THAT THE ETHIOPIAN FORCES WERE RESETTLING PEOPLE
AND ORGANIZING THEM OF A "CLASS STRUGGLE". THE
NROC ALSO PROMISED THAT LAND TRANSPORT BETWEEN
ADDIS ABAB AND ASMARA WOULD BE FUNCTIONING IN THE
NEAR FUTURE.

4. COMMENT: NEW NROC ANNOUNCEMENT OF 1 AUGUST SHOWS THAT ETHIOPIAN FORCES ARE CONTINUING TO CLEAR AREAS SOUTHEAST OF ASMARA AND ARE OPENING A SECOND ROAD TO IT. WE HAVE NO REASON NOT TO ACCEPT ETHIOPIAN CLAIMS AS FACTUAL. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MICRO-WAVE COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT AT DIGSA WAS THAT IT WAS THE KEY LINK IN THE ADDIS ABABA TO ASMARA MICRO-WAVE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM. LOCATIONS CITED IN PARA 1 HAD BEEN HELD BY EPLF FORCES. IT IS LIKELY THAT THE EPLF WITHDREW IN THE FACE OF ETHIOPIAN AIR, ARTILLERY AND ARMOR SUPERIORITY, CONTINUING THEIR SERIES OF TACTICAL WITHDRAWALS (REFTEL). IT APPEARS INCREASINGLY PROBABLE THAT THE EPLF IS REVERTING TO A STRATEGY OF GUERRILLA WARFARE RATHER THAN TRYING TO FACE ETHIOPIAN FORCES CONVENTIONALLY. THE EPLF MAY HAVE COME TO THIS DECISION AFTER OBSERVING THE LOSSES AND DEFEATS IMPOSED ON THE ELF MILITARILY, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT IT CAN REVERT TO UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE; SUCH A SHIFT MAY, HOWEVER, PROVE TO BE COSTLY TO THE EPLF IN PUBLIC SUPPORT WITHIN ERITREA AND IN THE AMOUNT OF FOREIGN SUPPORT IT CAN GARNER.
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NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED TO HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE.
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